

Upper Arlington students say new gender-neutral bathrooms are a major concern

At a time when more is being done to try to make every student feel seen and safe, five Upper Arlington students say they're all for that, but they're making an argument for comfort and privacy.

Channel 10TV
WBNS
10-21-21
11:00 pm News

Upper Arlington students say new gender-neutral bathrooms are a major concern

"I think I would be OK with it if there wasn't the risk of being walked in on," one student said.

10TV is not identifying the students out of safety and privacy concerns. 10TV

did, however, obtain permission from all students' parents to speak with them.

This year, Upper Arlington High School has been using gender-neutral bathrooms. The students say it's a constant; being walked in on by students and teachers of the opposite sex. The bathrooms, they say, are disgusting and are often covered in urine and feces.

"Every single [stall] was, like, destroyed and then there was even one where, like, there was a couple in the bathroom doing stuff," one female student said. "I just walked out. I couldn't even use the bathroom. I know it's not only me experiencing this stuff. I know there's a lot of other people and I just think everyone's voice needs to be heard about this situation."

Another student, a senior, says some girls are struggling during their periods.

"I've had some friends say that they'll check their pants to see if they've bled through because of menstrual cycles and they feel like they can't do that," she said. "So, they just hurry up, wash their hands and hope for the best."

One male student says for the entire first quarter of the school year he hasn't even gone to the restroom.

"This reaffirms I don't want to go to the bathroom and going to a gender-neutral bathroom because that's not as comfortable for me," he said.

They want to be clear by saying they are not against gender-neutral bathrooms. The majority of students, they say, are afraid to speak for how it might come across.

"They don't want to come across rude or be mean to the minority groups of students because we want to be accepting of everyone," the senior said.

"But, I just feel like we should be accepting of the majority of students' opinions, too."

In a statement to 10TV, the Upper Arlington Schools Director of Communications Karen Truett says every student and their voice matters. She also says the school has different styles of restrooms available to better accommodate a student's comfort level including gender-specific, all-gender private rooms and gender-specific restrooms with stalls.

The district's statement in its entirety can be found below.

The students say gender-specific restrooms are tucked away and are often locked.

"It's just become this really weird situation of no one really knows what the right answer is because it's uncomfortable no matter what," the male student said.

Truett says if a student feels uneasy reporting concerns to an adult, they can make an anonymous report through the Speak Up! safety reporting system that is available on the district's website.

Students say these concerns are not new and that teachers, staff and the district have been aware of these comfort issues for a while.

"I'm in my last year of high school and next year if this is still happening, I can't come back and my voice won't matter," the senior female said.

Here is the statement issued by Upper Arlington Schools, Thursday evening:

"The Upper Arlington High School staff works every day to ensure our facility is welcoming, safe and clean for students.

At our school every student and every student's voice matters. Our staff is committed to supporting each student, and we regularly meet with different groups of students to gather feedback, answer questions and learn of any concerns. We encourage all students to reach out to an adult if they are experiencing concerns of any kind in our school.

Our school has several different styles of restrooms available throughout the building, with the goal of providing all students an environment that is comfortable for them. Each floor on the academic wing has both gender-specific and all-gender private toilet rooms. We also have the traditional style gender-specific restrooms with stalls, and we have totally private restrooms with enclosed sinks.

We are honored to work with wonderful students who show respect for their fellow classmates, our staff members and our school building. However, at times young people do make choices that result in vandalism, unsanitary situations or unsafe behavior.

We monitor our school for these situations and take action as soon as possible. We are at our best when students and staff work together to make sure concerns about behaviors or the condition of our facilities are reported right away.

If a student feels uneasy directly reporting any concern to an adult, they can make an anonymous report through the Speak Up! Safety reporting system that is available on our website. A direct link to the reporting system has also been added to all student iPads."

[Local News: Recent Coverage](#) 